



July 4, 2025

Dr. Donde Ashmos Plowman
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
800 Andy Holt Tower
1331 Circle Park Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-0180

Dear Dr. Plowman:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

New Program-Approval

Undergraduate Certificate in Professional Advancement Through Hands-On Learning

Submission date:

6/13/2025

Intended Implementation date:

8/18/2025

Case ID:

SC031958

The institution proposes the implementation of the Undergraduate Certificate in Professional Advancement Through Hands-On Learning (PATH) in the College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies (CECS) with a launch date of August 18, 2025. The 12-semester credit hour (SCH) certificate program will be offered through face-to-face and distance education (online) methods of delivery. The face-to-face classes will be held on the Knoxville main campus. The online course platform is the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). The institution was approved for distance education February 12, 1998. The program will target students interested in enhancing their knowledge around emerging technologies and applying these skills to their area of study. The certificate will be available as an *add-on* credential to those already enrolled and pursuing a degree at the institution or as a *stand-on* credential for those enrolled elsewhere or who have already completed a baccalaureate program. The projected number of students expected to enroll in the program is 15-20 students per academic year. The program will be ongoing.

The institution is well-positioned to undertake this change within its College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies. CECS works closely with industry partners to provide all learners with real-world, hands-on learning experiences through internships, capstone projects, and research opportunities. In addition, the CECS develops cutting-edge curriculum to provide learners from all colleges with access to emerging technology and in-demand skills. The need for the program was based upon regional workforce demands in Tennessee to produce employees with essential emerging technology and industry knowledge. The PATH is designed to meet the occupational needs of local businesses and industries by offering technical training developed in partnership with industry.



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The program was described in the context of the institution's mission and appears to be consistent. An interdisciplinary group of faculty from the CECS, academic and student personnel, and three Board of Visitors industry partners met between October 2024 and April 2025 to design the certificate. The committee discussed, developed, and voted on the name, content, courses, and learning objectives. The program was reviewed and approved by the CECS faculty, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Undergraduate Council, and the Faculty Senate. The institution received institutional approval from the Faculty Senate. Documentation was provided. Undergraduate certificate programs do not require the approval of an institutional governing board. In addition, approval by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission is not required for certificate programs. A notification form for the Undergraduate Certificate in PATH was submitted to THEC on April 23, 2025. Documentation was provided.

The 12-SCH Certificate in PATH, a program schedule, and four student learning outcomes were provided. The curriculum includes nine SCHs of required courses and a three SCHs of elective course to be selected from a list of six courses. Assessment methods for outcomes could include tests, industry-partnered team projects, digital portfolio, skill credentialing exams, case-study analysis, design challenges, presentations, peer and mentorship feedback, research projects, capstones, reflective practice, and workplace simulation exercises. Course descriptions for all program courses were provided and appear to be appropriate for an undergraduate program.

Requirements for admission into and graduation from the program were provided and are consistent with higher education practices. The institution stated that the program will follow existing institutional policies and procedures to grant credit for the courses in the program. The institution adheres to the federal definition of a credit hour.

The administrative and academic oversight of the program will be provided by the Senior Academic Program Coordinator and the Assistant Dean of Faculty Affairs and New Programs. The Program Coordinator will monitor program data and gather information for program assessment. The Assistant Dean will work directly with faculty and student affairs to monitor program progress, analyzing program data and both instructor and student feedback to identify opportunities for program growth and improvement. The Senior Academic Program Coordinator reports to the Assistant Dean of Faculty Affairs and New Programs, who reports to the Vice Provost and Founding Dean of the College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies.

The program will not be offered in a compressed timeframe.

The institution provided a faculty roster that listed five current full-time faculty members. The current faculty members appear to be qualified to teach the courses assigned. The number of existing full-time faculty appears to be adequate for the projected number of students. All courses in the program are assigned to full-time faculty. There will be minimal impact on faculty workload for existing faculty, as the courses in PATH will be taught regardless of the availability of the new certificate. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications and faculty adequacy is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.



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The library and learning/information resources supporting the new program appear to be adequate. No new library resources will be needed to serve PATH students. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the program, no new library resources will be needed. Students will be able to utilize OneSearch to search journals on their individual subject. All electronic resources are available to students in the program with a valid NetID and password. Program students will be made aware of library and learning/information resources via course syllabi and individual course orientation. Faculty usually provide students with guidance on resources relevant for class projects and assignments and how to access those resources. Information on resources is commonly posted on the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) course pages and on the library website. Students are provided with access to research guides and a specialized librarian that guides them on accessing library materials and information sources. Point-of-need services are available through chat (AskUsNow), text, phone, in-person, and through FAQs. Research consultations are offered by appointment. Resource sharing is available. Tutorial guides are provided on citing sources and finding books and journals.

Student and academic support services appear to be adequate to support students in the program and are offered in both a centralized and decentralized format. Decentralized support is provided at the college, department, and program level. Centralized support is provided by several offices, including the Division of Enrollment Management and the Office of the Provost. Services provided by the CECS include academic advising by professional advisors, the RISE Program, and Career Catalyst. The RISE Program matches industry and professionals to serve as mentors to learners in emerging employment sectors. Career Catalyst is an annual event that connects industry, business, and community leaders to envision collaborative initiatives to create a high-performing workforce for emerging careers. The Office of Innovative Technologies (OIT) offers technology services via phone, chat, in-person, through an online form, or through the Knowledge Base. The OIT also provides support for the Canvas LMS via phone, online ticket, and on the front-facing Canvas course page. Additional support includes online workshops such as *Canvas Training for Students* and tutorials such as *Getting Started with Canvas*, *Canvas Student Guide*, and *Tips for Canvas Quizzes*.

Existing facilities in the Claxton Education building will be used to implement the certificate. The CECS administrative and faculty offices are located in the building. The CECS doesn't have any college owned classroom space; rooms are assigned by the Registrar's Office. The Innovation Lab, located in the Claxton Education building, is a space where students can collaborate on hands-on projects to apply the skills learned in the classroom. The lab contains computers, quadrapeds, AR/VR headsets, and other technology tools. No additional or specialized equipment is necessary for the new program. All physical facilities, equipment, and services that are needed for PATH are already in place. The impact to current facilities, programs, and services is expected to be minimal.

Financial resources appear to be adequate to support the program. The institution provided a budget for the first year of operation. The revenue source is tuition. Expenditures include communication and marketing, recruitment, advising, and academic administration. Projected revenue exceeds expenditures. Faculty salaries are not included in the budget, as faculty already service all certificate courses, which are offered in other undergraduate majors in CECS. No budget resources will be directed to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services related to the new program. The institution provided a contingency plan should revenue not materialize or costs exceed



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revenue. The institution will evaluate enrollment after three years. If enrollment expectations are not met, the marketing strategy will be adjusted. If cost assessments exceed projections, expenditures will be adjusted.

The institution's planning and assessment processes appear adequate. The annual program assessment process includes determining student learning outcomes, collecting and analyzing data, and describing how the evidence has been used to improve the program. Student assessment of all academic courses and instructors is also accomplished. The annual program assessment is coordinated through the Department of Institutional Effectiveness, which conducts an annual meta-assessment review and prepares a summary report, which is shared with faculty and the administration.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Undergraduate Certificate in Professional Advancement Through Hands-On Learning. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of accreditation.

An invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus is enclosed with the liaison's copy of this letter.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. J. Matthew Melton at (404) 994-6553 or via email at mmelton@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/TBB:lp

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Dr. Heather G. Hartman, Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, The
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Dr. J. Matthew Melton, Vice President, SACSCOC